

## ***The Need for International Education in Idaho's Classrooms***

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### **Position Statement:**

International education not only is an important element in our development as world citizens, it is also imperative for our national security and leadership. Education breaks down walls of ignorance, fear and apathy and builds bridges of understanding, trust and engagement. For the USA to be an effective world leader in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, “Americans must be more knowledgeable” about the world in which we live, in all its complexity and diversity, and be more engaged in it. Richard W. Riley, 2002

In 2002, the American Forum for Global Education advocated that “the study of the world can be divided into three main themes: global issues, global culture, and global connections.” Each theme, delineated by requisite knowledge, skills, and participation, serves to promote an engaged citizenry who are residents of a planet that has become a global village – requiring what Elise Boulding (1988) acknowledged as our “civic attention and action on a transnational and transcultural scale.”

The dedicated inclusion of those themes extends instruction of Idaho's Thoroughness Standard #8 in which “The importance of students acquiring the skills to enable them to be responsible citizens of their homes, schools and communities is emphasized,” to include the premise that we educate United States citizens for responsible participation in our communities, our nation and our interdependent world. As Charles Titus (1994) cited “the future of American democracy depends in large part on how well the citizens of our nation gain the competence of citizenship needed to carry out their civic responsibilities, both here at home and in the world.”

Titus presents that civic education for global understanding calls for changes in the traditional approach to social studies subject matter in history, geography, and economics. Yet, insists that the instruction should include a renewed engagement with and dedication to the civic needs of our nation through “explicit and continuing study of the basic concepts and values underlying our democratic community and constitutional order,” (Butts, 1988, p. 184).

The international education lessons designed by the teachers and administrators on the International Education Task Force infuse global issues, global culture, and global connections in all social studies courses, grades six through 12. Rather than view these lessons as one more item in courses already ripe in content, the task force fosters a vision that global perspectives can enrich all courses if included as rich, illustrative examples of the concepts already detailed in the Idaho Achievement Standards for Social Studies. Hence, the inclusion of targeted lessons on European Union: Germany, Latin America: Mexico, China, and the Basque Country in the study of Geography and Cultures, Idaho History, World History, U.S. History, Economics, and American Government provides students with a broader understanding of the concepts that equip them to “live effectively

in the complex and interrelated world to which their country is inextricably connected,” (Titus, 1994).

Why dedicated lessons on just these four particular countries or regions? One goal for international education in Idaho is that teachers and students will discover the importance of each included area of study to the State of Idaho - historically, politically, and economically. Another goal is that the study of the four areas will prompt classroom discussion and investigation of other regions by drawing upon “the cross-cultural experiences of students and teachers who have studied/taught abroad, participated in various international activities, engaged in international travel, and have family members living overseas or spouses with military experience; teachers can open a door to a work of experiences that address a variety of interests, beliefs, and practices of other cultures,” (Taylor, 1996).

Once more, we ask why the need for international education in Idaho’s classrooms? In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Secretary of State Colin Powell said that Americans must be engaged with the rest of the world more than ever before – “a global civic culture that helps Americans recognize their obligations to their own nation and to the planet at large,” (Titus, 1994).

Boulding, Elise (1988). Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World. Teachers College Press: New York.

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Czarra, Fred (2002). “Global Education Checklist for Teachers, Schools, School Systems and State Education Agencies.” American Forum for Global Education: New York, NY.

Taylor, Howard Eugene (1996). “Practical Suggestions for Teaching Global Education.” ERIC Digest: ED395924.

Titus, Charles (1994). “Civic Education for Global Understanding.” ERIC Digest: ED370882.